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C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 002758

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR, DRL, AND WHA

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [CU](#) [NL](#) [EUN](#)

SUBJECT: CUBA/NETHERLANDS/EU: DUTCH HOPE EU WILL PRESERVE RESTRICTIONS

REF: A. (A) STATE 228300

[1](#)B. (B) THE HAGUE 2728

Classified By: POL Counselor Andrew Schofer for Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The Dutch support retaining the EU's June 2003 measures to pressure Cuba on human rights, but as EU president they feel bound to seek a "consensus" position. As the EU is currently split on the issue, according to Dutch contacts, a consensus to change the current measures may not be obtainable -- in which case they would remain in place. Dutch interlocutors asked to remain in close contact on Cuba and would appreciate information on U.S. approaches to other EU members if possible. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Poloff delivered ref A message to MFA's Cuba policy advisor Jan Jaap Groenemeijer October 26. Groenemeijer said the Dutch agree with the line of reasoning presented, i.e. that Cuba should be kept under pressure to reform its human rights. Groenemeijer said he believed that the fact that a majority of Cuban dissidents supported the June measures "weighs heavily" in favor of retaining them, and stated that the Netherlands would not suggest lifting the dissident invitation policy. Nevertheless, Groenemeijer assessed that while several EU members are holding strong on maintaining the June measures, a group of others have questioned the measures' utility in bringing about changes in the human rights situation in Cuba. Still others, he said, want to find a compromise position. Groenemeijer said he believes that "all EU members want to maintain pressure on human rights in Cuba," but they disagree on which measures would be most effective in bringing about change. Groenemeijer said that the Dutch would believe that a loss of EU consensus is tantamount to a loss of pressure on Cuba but also recognize that the EU "cannot make too many concessions."

[1](#)3. (C) As EU members will not formally present their positions on Cuba until mid-November, according to Groenemeijer, the Dutch are not fully aware of some states' positions and/or the factors behind them. While human rights remains an "important" consideration, not all EU members believe that the June measures provide the best mechanism for maintaining pressure on Cuba in this area, he said -- and some members probably have "other interests" in mind. Groenemeijer asked if the Spanish position on Cuba was having a derogatory effect on U.S.-Spanish relations and suggested that that the U.S. might want to consider sharing with the Dutch Presidency its analysis regarding other EU members' positions, if possible. He stressed that the Dutch want to find a way to navigate this issue in a way that satisfies U.S. and Dutch concerns.

[1](#)4. (C) Poloff met separately on October 26 with Aleid Bos of the MFA's human rights office. (Note: Although the Cuba desk has the lead on this issue, Bos maintains a "watching brief" with regard to human rights situation in Cuba.) Poloff shared reftel points and emphasized that the USG is deeply concerned by Spanish efforts to reverse the 2003 guidelines. Poloff stressed that human rights issues should continue to take precedence over other interests when dealing with Cuba. Bos agreed that human rights issues should lead in the discourse over Cuba, however, she noted that other factors, such as economic opportunities and development, must also be considered. She was aware of the efforts but not the details of the proposals now under discussion in Havana under the leadership of the Dutch Ambassador there. Bos said she would coordinate with the Cuba desk to make sure that our common human rights concerns are taken into account.

[1](#)5. (C) POLCOUNS also raised the issue on October 26 with Director of Political Affairs Jaap Werner. Werner echoed Groenemeijer's statement that the EU is divided on the Cuba issue, with some members pushing for a "harder" line and others demanding a "softer" position. Werner stressed that, as EU president, the Dutch had an obligation to seek a common position. If no consensus developed to change the current strategy, he noted, then one likely outcome would be to leave the previously agreed measures in place. While such an outcome would not bother the Dutch, Werner stressed that others would find this an unsatisfactory result and would therefore push hard for a new "compromise" position. Werner did not expect a decision to be made before mid-November, and

thought the discussion would probably drag on for some time.
He urged us to remain in close contact on this issue.
SOBEL